

## INTRODUCTION

Community service is primarily a program which allows non-violent offenders to remain in the community rather than go to jail. But the goals of the program can only be achieved with support and help from the local community.

Offenders who are required by the court to complete a community service are being given the opportunity to contribute to society by working for the community. This involvement gives them the chance to develop positive attitudes, self-confidence, and interpersonal skills which will help them in the future.

But the CSO volunteer can only become a volunteer if people like yourself in community agencies or service associations agree to help offenders help others.

## WHY GET INVOLVED?

- Do you need new volunteers, especially young men, for your volunteer programs?
- Do you believe in giving a chance to young people in trouble with the law by encouraging them to participate in, rather than hinder, community programs?
- Do you think it is a good idea to save tax dollars by keeping selected non-violent offenders in the community rather than sending them to jail?
- Are you willing to encourage offenders to develop new skills, new interests (which may generate a desire to seek employment in similar fields) and better work habits through volunteer work?
- Do you think the process of helping other people in a less fortunate position than yourself encourages a caring attitude and a sense of self-worth?

- Do you think it is important to help offenders use their leisure time more constructively and form new, responsible friendships?
- If the answer is yes to most of these questions, why not encourage your agency to be a participant in the CSO program.

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

### 1. The Selection Process

Community service is only one way of helping offenders, but it is not appropriate for all of them. CSO participants are carefully selected and must be willing to take part in the program.

The screening process is a threefold one. Before passing sentence, the judge may ask for an assessment of the suitability of the offender for a CSO. This is prepared by a probation officer or CSO co-ordinator, who interviews the offender and explains the CSO program. The judge will then take this assessment into consideration when he imposes the sentence, deciding whether the offender would benefit from greater community involvement and, if so, the number of hours which must be worked.

Next, the CSO co-ordinator meets with the offender to ascertain interests and skills in order to match these with a compatible volunteer placement.

The final decision on the suitability of the offender is made by the agency offering the placement. The agency interviews and screens the CSO volunteer just like any other volunteer. Rejection of inappropriate referrals is infrequent, but when this occurs there is the

assurance that the CSO co-ordinator or probation officer will be responsible for following up on the situation.

### 2. Counseling for the CSO Offender

The CSO is a condition of a probation order, and a probation officer will provide counseling as necessary.

### 3. Support for the Community Agency

If any difficulties arise, the agency should contact the CSO co-ordinator or probation officer immediately. Occasionally, a CSO volunteer may not keep an appointment or may not perform the tasks as required. Dealing with these problems quickly benefits not only your agency, but also the CSO volunteer.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

1. Right: The agency has the right to expect CSO volunteers to work hard and to put as much effort into the job as does the 'regular' agency volunteer.

Responsibility: The agency should provide CSO volunteers with all the training that it offers its regular volunteers. Any special equipment, tools or materials required by the particular assignment should be provided. CSO volunteers should also be included in any special benefits (such as out-of-pocket travel expenses) and rewards (volunteer awards) which are offered to agency volunteers.

CSO volunteers will neither be paid for the volunteer work, nor should this assignment replace an employee who would otherwise be paid. The offenders' volunteer assignments

must not interfere with their job or school work, but should be performed during their leisure time.

2. Right: The agency has the right to expect CSO volunteers to be punctual when assigned to a duty - and, of course, to do the job specified.

Responsibility: The agency is asked to keep an accurate record of the hours worked by CSO volunteers and to sign the record card they carry. This is necessary in order to verify that the CSO volunteer has worked the number of hours required by the court.

3. Right: The agency has the right to expect help from the local CSO co-ordinator or probation officer should a problem arise with the placement (poor work standards, missed hours, etc.).

Responsibility: The agency should contact the CSO co-ordinator as soon as difficulties arise. The CSO co-ordinator should be advised whenever a CSO volunteer fails to keep an appointment, does not perform a task when requested to do so, or performs it poorly.

To evaluate the services which CSO volunteers are providing, CSO co-ordinators would appreciate a short phone call every month from the agencies to discuss the success or failure of each person's placement.

4. Right: The agency has the right to inform its staff members supervising new volunteers that they are participants in the CSO program.

Responsibility: The agency should protect the feelings of offenders by

not singling them out for special attention. It is not recommended that other volunteers or clients of the agency be told that an individual is a CSO volunteer.

For further information on this program contact:

Local Probation/Parole Office or  
CSO Co-ordinator

or

Community Programs Support Services Branch  
Ministry of Correctional Services  
2001 Eglinton Avenue East  
Scarborough, Ontario M1L 4P1  
Telephone: (416) 750-3475

or

Communications Branch  
Ministry of Correctional Services  
2001 Eglinton Avenue East  
Scarborough, Ontario M1L 4P1  
Telephone: (416) 750-3421



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